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ABSTRACT

A study of 107 Illinois elementary school teachers who were enrolled in graduate courses investigated the relationship between teacher characteristics and congruity, incongruity, and inconsistency with the policies of two teacher associations. The teacher characteristics consisted of age, educational attainment, interest in politics, membership in the National Education Association (NEA) or the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), and level of participation in organization activities. Twelve policy issues were selected from a review of NEA and AFT materials published during the last ten years. Two survey instruments were used to identify the teacher characteristics and to explore the teachers' positions on the 12 issues. Each issue was represented by a set of two responses, one of which reflected an organization position, while the other contradicted that position. Teachers' responses to the policy statements were categorized as congruent, incongruent, or inconsistent, based on comparisons between the two sets of responses. Fourteen research hypotheses posited that teacher characteristics would be related to the frequency of the three types of responses. Significant differences were obtained for four of the hypotheses, involving age, membership, and level of participation. It is assumed that the characteristics selected for the study were either too broad or were inappropriately related to the phenomena. (Author/FG)

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A STUDY OF RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN TEACHER CHARACTERISTICS AND CONGRUITY, INCONGRUITY, AND INCONSISTENCY WITH POLICY POSITIONS OF TEACHERS ORGANIZATIONS

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Teachers have important and extensive relationships with the political system in America; ones built upon such issues as public financing and governance of education. Consequently, these relationships dictate that teachers organize as a political interest group.

Truman (1951), describing the characteristics of interest groups that successfully interact with the political system, included group size, organization, financing, lobbying techniques, and group cohesion. Group cohesion was judged to be the crucial element because it gave political significance to other factors. In other words, without a degree of cohesion, size, organization, financing, and lobbying technique, would have little impact on the group's success as an advocacy group.

Cartwright (1968) stated that group cohesion was directly related to group responses that were perceived as meeting member's needs and values. When the group response failed to meet these expectations, it diminished the group's attractiveness and threatened group cohesion. A second threat to cohesion was the phenomena of cross pressures. Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1948); Pinner (1968); and Sperlich (1971) offered definitions essentially similar in concept: cross pressures occur when inconsistencies exist among the cognitions related to an issue or

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proposed action. The threat to group cohesion resulted from the individual's effort to reduce the inconsistency by denial of commitment, withdrawal, or other action.

Given the extensiveness of the interrelationship between teachers and the political system, the necessity for teachers to organize as an interest group, and the vital role group cohesion plays in effective petitioning of the political system, it is valuable to investigate characteristics associated with the existence of factors threatening teacher group cohesion. And, since the major groups representing teachers in the political arena are the National Education Association [NEA] and the American Federation of Teachers [AFT], it is preferable to focus on cohesion within these teacher organizations.

This study of teacher group cohesion was first approached by identifying three factors, or types of teacher response, that effected its existence and strength. The first type of teacher response reflected the group's success in representing a member's expectation. As Cartwright (1968) noted, success in meeting member's expectations generated a stronger attraction to the group and greater cohesion. This was classified as a response of congruity and was operationally defined as two or more individuals or groups sharing similar positions on an issue. Evidence of congruity between an individual's position and the organization's position on a policy issue occurred when the teacher responded favorably to the organization's position and unfavorably to a contradictory position.

The second type of response occurred when the group position failed to meet the member's expectation and resulted in a withdrawal from group involvement. The incongruity type of response was deemed detrimental to group cohesion since it reflected a lack of conformity among member attitudes toward certain issues.

Incongruity was defined as two or more individuals or groups not sharing similar positions on an issue. For this study, evidence of incongruity occurred when a teacher responded unfavorably to the organization's position on an issue and favorably to the contradiction of that position, or responded unfavorably to both positions.

The third type of response represented the phenomena of "cross pressures." This was evident when the individual teacher exhibited cognitive inconsistency by supporting both the group's position and the contradictory position. It was assumed that the teacher's attempt to resolve this cognitive dissonance was often accompanied by a withdrawal of commitment to the group. Therefore, the inconsistent type of response was also judged to be a factor threatening to group cohesion. Inconsistency was defined as holding contradictory positions on the same issue. In this study, evidence of inconsistency occurred when a teacher responded favorably to the organization's position on an issue and favorably to the contradictory position.

The use of a congruity--incongruity construct was limited in this study because of the existence of a second construct: the inconsistency response. If the congruity--incongruity construct

was the only one in operation, teachers could have been scored at varying degrees of congruity. For example, a teacher responding congruently on 10 of 12 issues could be scored as 83 percent congruent, a teacher with 6 of 12 congruent responses would be 50 percent congruent and a teacher responding congruently on 3 of 12, 25 percent congruent. But by recognizing the inconsistent type of response, the information is distorted. A teacher responding with 6 congruent, 2 incongruent, and 4 inconsistent responses is still 50 percent congruent, but considerably different than the 50 percent congruent teacher with zero inconsistent responses. Therefore, the study did not incorporate the congruity--incongruity construct as a continuous measure and did not classify teachers as more or less congruent. Rather, the study noted the frequency of occurrence of the various types of responses.

Three relationships were investigated in this study. First, political science research had suggested that certain social characteristics were related to greater political participation and it was assumed that these same characteristics would be relevant to the study of politically motivated behavior through interest group activities. These included age (Lipset, 1959 and Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes, 1960), educational attainment (Massialas, 1969; Lipset, 1959; Campbell et. al., 1960; and Lane, 1959), and interest in politics (Campbell, Gurin and Miller, 1954; Campbell et. al., 1960; and Pomper, 1975). If the data secured by the study supported the contention that these

social characteristics are related to the frequency of congruity, incongruity, and inconsistency, then it may be possible to more accurately predict the effectiveness of teacher group action.

A second type of relationship important to the investigation was the nature and degree of membership, and factors related to cohesion. If the level of participation in group activity was an indicator of congruity, then highly active members, nonactive members, and nonmember teachers would exhibit a different frequency of congruent, incongruent, and inconsistent responses to policy issues. Such findings would be useful in understanding the nature of group attraction for teachers.

The third relationship under study was that between combinations of social characteristics and levels of participation, and factors effecting cohesion. Research in political participation (Lane, 1959; Lipset, 1959; and Pomper, 1975) strongly suggested that few individual characteristics are exclusive in predicting participation. If certain characteristics, and combination of characteristics, could be established as strong predictors of congruity, a finer distinction could be made about teachers as a political interest group.

The study focused on the population of elementary school teachers in the state of Illinois. The sample used by the investigator consisted of 107 Illinois elementary school teachers working in districts outside the city of Chicago. The sample was composed of teachers enrolled in graduate and graduate extension courses offered by the University of Illinois and Illinois State University.

The selection of the sample from graduate courses was justified for two reasons. First, teacher salaries are based partially on educational attainment which would motivate most teachers to attend graduate classes sometime during their careers. Second, a pilot study incorporating the same method of drawing the sample from graduate classes revealed that such samples are highly comparable in characteristics with the general teacher population. The pilot study found a comparability between the sample and the population which warranted the use of this method in the study.

Data were collected on the teachers in an effort to compare characteristics of the sample to the Illinois elementary school teacher population. The characteristics included educational attainment, grade level taught, teaching experience, racial and sex characteristics, and organization membership. The sample was found to be highly representative of the population regarding educational attainment and fairly representative of the grade levels taught. Eighteen percent of the teachers were currently not teaching and on educational or pregnancy leaves. The teachers in the sample were slightly less experienced and contained a somewhat larger percentage of females than found in the general teacher population. The racial characteristics of the two groups were also fairly well matched. In regards to organization membership, slightly more of the sample teachers were nonmembers than generally found in the population.

There were five characteristics of teachers pertinent to the study's hypotheses. These were educational attainment, age, interest in politics, organization membership, and level of participation in organization activities. The educational attainment of the sample was comparable to the general population in Illinois. The majority of teachers, 73 percent, had at least a Bachelor's degree. The remaining 27 percent possessed a Master's degree or more.

The 12 policy issues used to draw responses from the teachers were identified by reviewing NEA and AFT publications and convention material of the last 10 years. Issues that were discussed in editorials and articles, or served as the focus of resolutions, were selected for the initial list. The list contained 20 issues which were rated by a group of 10 teachers, 2 union leaders, and 3 University faculty associated with teacher training and education at the University of Illinois. This exercise produced a rank ordering of issues based on their perceived importance to teachers and education and the highest ranking 12 issues were selected for the instrument. Table 1 contains the 12 issues with a brief description of each.

Each issue was covered in the instrument by a set of two responses. One response reflecting the organization's position on the issue and the other response contradictory to this position. The teachers were requested to read each statement and

TABLE 1

DESCRIPTION OF THE TWELVE POLICY ISSUES

VOUCHERS -	Financing public education by Federal or state grants to parents in the form of vouchers.
PRIORITY -	Government reordering of national priorities placing education at the top.
FUNDING -	Federal Government assuming responsibility for one third share of funding for public schools.
ACCREDITATION -	Teachers involved in decision making roles in the accreditation of teacher training institu-institutions.
COLLECTIVE -	Teachers right to collective bargaining in their relationships with local school boards.
ACTION -	Support of affirmative action efforts to increase minority hiring in the public schools.
STRIKE -	The use of a strike action when collective bargaining efforts fail to resolve differences.
YEAR -	Year around sessions for the public schools.
STATE -	State government mandating general curriculum guidelines and subject matters.
PROMOTION -	Determination of criteria for the promotion of children between grade levels.
TEACHER -	Teachers providing college credit courses to other teachers.
FIFTH -	A fifth year of preparation before certification of a teacher.

mark their responses on a seven point Likert-type scale. Those responding with a +3, +2, or +1 were scored as a favorable response (+) and those responding with a -3, -2, or -1 were scored as an unfavorable response (-). Those pairs marked favorable (+) for organization position and unfavorable (-) on nonorganization position were judged to reflect a teacher's congruity with organization positions. The pairs marked favorable (+) on both positions were judged as the result of a teacher's cognitive inconsistency and represented an inconsistent response. Those pairs marked unfavorable (-) on organization position, regardless of the response for the nonorganization position, were classified as teacher incongruity with organization positions. Table 2 illustrates these distinctions.

TABLE 2

INTERPRETATION OF RESPONSES FOR
CONGRUITY, INCONGRUITY, AND INCONSISTENCY

Organization Position	Nonorganization Position	Inference
+	-	Congruity
+	+	Inconsistency
-	+	Incongruity
-	-	Incongruity

*Symbolizes teacher response: + favorable, - unfavorable

Summary of Findings

Fourteen research hypotheses were advanced in the study. The general concerns represented by the hypotheses were with five teacher characteristics: age, educational attainment, interest in politics, membership in organizations, level of participation in organization activities, and the frequency of congruent, incongruent and inconsistent responses.

t - test procedures were applied to the means of the different groups of characteristics in an effort to identify significant differences. In 10 cases, significant differences were not determined ($p > .05$) and the hypotheses were rejected. In two cases, a significant difference between means was noted, but the findings were in the opposite direction prescribed by the hypotheses. The one hypothesis unequivocally supported by the findings stated that teachers with lower interest in politics respond more frequently with inconsistent responses than teachers with higher interest in politics.

In an effort to derive additional information from the data that could be used to identify the predicted relationships and explain the initial findings, a series of *post hoc* analyses was completed.

Analysis of Finer Group Delineation for Age, Interest in Politics, Participation in Organization Activities and the Occurrence of Responses

The first set of *post hoc* analysis involved a finer delineation of the sample for the age, interest in politics, and participation in organization activities characteristics and an

examination of their relationship with the frequency of congruent, incongruent and inconsistent responses. The delineations used in the new analysis were based on a somewhat arbitrary attempt to divide the ages and scores into three groups of comparable size and included the following:

a)	Age	Group 1 - 23 to 29 years (Younger)
		Group 2 - 30 to 39 years (Middle)
		Group 3 - 40 to 57 years (Older)
b)	Interest in Politics	Group 1 - 0-1-2 score (Lower Interest)
		Group 2 - 3-4-5 score (Moderate Interest)
		Group 3 - 6-7-8 score (Higher Interest)
c)	Participation	Group 1 - 0 to 6 score (Lower Participation)
		Group 2 - 7 to 14 score (Moderate (Participation)
		Group 3 - 15 to 22 score (Higher Participation)

The purpose of this division was to determine whether the gross categorization (younger--older; lower--higher) used in the t - test analysis might have masked the suspected significant differences. The statistical procedure involved was the one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and in the case of a significant F-ratio, an S-Method procedure was adopted to locate the significance among the three groups under study.

Age

A one way ANOVA was applied to the frequency of congruent responses recorded by the three age groups. An F-ratio of 5.08 was obtained and deemed significant at the .05 level of significance. These data are presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3

RESULTS OF ONE WAY ANOVA ON THREE AGE GROUPS AND FREQUENCY OF CONGRUENT RESPONSE

Source	df	SS	MS	F-ratio	Decision F .95
Between Groups	2	33.15	16.57	5.08	Reject Ho
Within Groups	104	339.11	3.26		
Total	106	372.26			

An S-Method procedure was performed on the means of the three groups and a significant difference was found between Group 2 (30 to 39 years) and Group 3 (40 to 57 years). The middle aged teachers responded significantly more frequently with congruent responses than older aged teachers. The difference was sigificant at the .05 level. This information is presented in Table 4.

TABLE 4

RESULTS OF S-METHOD ON THREE AGE GROUPS AND FREQUENCY OF CONGRUENT RESPONSES

Group	n	$\bar{x}$	S.D.
1. 23 to 29 years	41	8.34_{ab}	1.84
2. 30 to 39 years	36	8.72_{b}	1.72
3. 40 to 57 years	30	7.33_{a}	1.86

The three age groups were also compared for differences in the frequency of incongruent responses. An analysis of variance

procedure of the three means generated an F ratio of 3.26 which was significant at the .05 level. The results are described in Table 5.

TABLE 5

RESULTS OF ONE WAY ANOVA FOR THREE AGE GROUPS AND FREQUENCY OF INCONGRUENT RESPONSES

Source	df	SS	MS	F-ratio	Decision F .95
Between Groups	2	19.27	9.63	3.26	Reject Ho
Within Groups	104	306.69	2.95		
Total	106	325.96			

In order to locate the significant difference for incongruent responses among the three age grups, and S-Method analysis of the means was completed and revealed that the older group of teachers responded more frequently with incongruent responses than the middle aged teachers. The data is described in Table 6.

TABLE 6

RESULTS OF S-METHOD ON THREE AGE GROUPS AND FREQUENCY OF INCONGRUENT RESPONSES

Group	n	$\bar{x}$	S.D.
1. 23 to 29 years	41	3.05_{ab}	1.60
2. 30 to 39 years	36	2.60_{b}	1.61
3. 40 to 57 years	30	3.67_{a}	1.25

An ANOVA analysis was also completed on the three age groups to identify significant relationships in regards to the inconsistent response. An F-ratio of 1.08 was obtained and the .05 level of significance was not sustained.

In summary, two significant differences were determined between the three groups for age and the occurrence of the three types of responses. Middle aged teachers responded significantly more frequently with congruent responses than older teachers, and older teachers responded significantly more frequently with incongruent responses than middle aged teachers. These differences were significant at the .05 level. Significant differences were not noted for age and the occurrence of inconsistent responses.

Interest in Politics

The measure for the teachers' interest in politics ranged from zero to eight points. The collected data were divided among three distinct groups and a one way ANOVA was used to analyze the frequency of congruent responses. An F-ratio of .56 was obtained which was not significant at the .05 level.

The three levels of interest in politics were also compared for differences in the frequency of incongruent responses. An analysis of variance procedure on the three means generated an F ratio of .80 which was judged not significant at the .05 level.

An ANOVA procedure was also used to identify significant relationships between the three levels of interest in politics

regarding inconsistent responses. An F-ratio of 4.04 was obtained and deemed significant at the .05 level. Table 7 contains the information derived from this analysis.

TABLE 7

RESULTS OF ONE WAY ANOVA FOR THREE INTEREST IN POLITICS GROUPS AND FREQUENCY INCONSISTENT RESPONSES

Source	df	SS	MS	F-ratio	Decision F .95
Between Groups	2	10.09	5.05	4.04	Reject Ho
Within Groups	104	130.60	1.25		
Total	106	140.69			

The effort to locate the source of the significance for the three groups and the occurrence of inconsistent responses through and S-Method analysis of the means proved unsuccessful.

In summary, significant differences were not found among the three levels of interest in politics for the occurrence of congruent and incongruent responses. A significant difference was found for the inconsistent response, however, the S-Method failed to locate the source of the significant difference.

Level of Participation

The range of total response values for the level of participation characteristic was 0 to 22 points. The sample was divided into three groups representing approximately a third of the obtained values: 0-6; 7-14; 15-22. The three means were compared in a one way ANOVA analysis which produced an F-ratio of

6.36, significant at the .05 level. The results of the ANOVA procedure on this data are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

RESULTS OF ONE WAY ANOVA FOR THREE LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION IN ORGANIZATION ACTIVITIES AND FREQUENCY OF CONGRUENT RESPONSES

Source	df	SS	MS	F-ratio	Decision F .95
Between Groups	2	40.24	20.12	6.36	Reject Ho
Within Groups	72	227.56	3.16		
Total	74	267.80			

An S-Method procedure was used to contrast the means of the three groups in order to locate the source of significance. A significant difference at the .05 level was noted between the first group (lower participation) mean of 7.51 and the third group (higher participation) mean of 10.00. The higher participation teacher responded significantly more frequently with congruent responses than lower participation teachers. Table 9 contains the data from the S-Method analysis.

Table 9

RESULTS OF S-METHOD FOR THREE LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION IN ORGANIZATION ACTIVITIES AND FREQUENCY OF CONGRUENT RESPONSES

Source	n	$\bar{x}$	S.D.
Group 1 - Lower Participation	47	7.51_a	1.62
Group 2 - Moderate Participation	21	8.24_{ab}	2.19
Group 3 - Higher Participation	7	10.00_b	1.51

The three levels of participation were also compared for differences in the frequency of inconsistent responses. An analysis of variance procedure on the three means produced an F-ratio of .50, not significant at the .05 level.

In summary, two types of responses were considered for the three levels of participation. A significant difference was found between higher participant teachers, who responded significantly more frequently with congruent responses, and lower participant teachers. This finding supported the research hypothesis. Significant differences were not found among the three groups for the inconsistent response.

Summary and Conclusion

The primary focus of the study was to investigate the differences in the frequency of occurrence of three types of factors effecting teacher group cohesion in relation to certain characteristics of teachers, that is, the frequency of congruent, incongruent, and inconsistent responses and their relationship to

age, educational attainment, political interest, membership in organization, and level of participation in organization activities. One hundred and seven public school teachers from northwestern, central, and east central Illinois participated in the study.

The thrust of the 14 research hypotheses was that a relationship existed between the teacher characteristics and teacher responses to policy issues. The 24 items dealt with 12 policy issues associated with schools, education, and teachers. The data were collected by having each teacher complete two parts of the instrument.

The first part of the instrument focused on the policy issues. Half of the items expressed the teacher organizations' positions and the other half expressed contradictory positions on the same issues. Therefore, each teacher generated two responses for each of the 12 issues. In the case where a teacher responded favorably to the organzation's position and unfavorably to the contradictory position, he was scored as giving a congruent response. When the reverse occurred, that is, unfavorable support for the organization's position and favorable support for the contradictory position, or when the respondent expressed an unfavorable stance toward both positions, the response was classified as one of incongruity. In the case where a teacher responded favorably on both positions, the response was deemed to be inconsistent.

The second part of the instrument collected information on each teacher which enabled the investigator to categorize the sample into different groups according to age, educational attainment, interest in politics, membership, and level of participation in organization activities.

To test the research hypotheses, differences in scores were subjected to a *t* - test. A majority of the null hypotheses were retained. Of the three hypotheses where significant findings occurred, two were in directions opposite to that predicted by the hypotheses. To further test the hypotheses, and the relationships associated with them, a series of post hoc analyses was completed on the scores. The sample was further divided by age, interest in politics, and level of participation into more distinctive groupings and a one way analysis of variance [ANOVA] was used to determine significance. If four cases, significant differences were noted.

On the basis of the findings, the following conclusions are proposed.

1. While the hypothesis that older teachers respond more frequently with congruent responses than younger teachers was not supported, a relationship between age and congruent response was identified. The older teachers tend to make fewer congruent responses than the younge teachers and than the middle aged teachers.

2. The hypothesis stating that older teachers respond more frequently with incongruent responses than younger teachers was supported. The significant relationship, however, is between older teachers and middle aged teachers.

3. The hypothesis stating that younger teachers respond more frequently with inconsistent responses than older teachers was not supported.

4. The hypothesis stating that teachers whose highest attained degree is a Bachelor's exhibit no significant differences in the frequency of congruent, incongruent, and inconsistent responses when compared with teachers whose highest attained degree is a Master's was supported.

5. The hypothesis stating that teachers judged to be more interested in politics respond more frequently with congruent responses than teachers judged as less interested in politics was not supported.

6. The hypothesis stating that teachers judged to be more intersted in politics respond more frequently with incongruent responses than teachers judged to be less interested in politics was not supported.

7. The hypothesis stating that teachers judged to be less interested in politics respond more frequently with inconsistent responses than teachers judged as more interested in politics was supported.

8. The hypothesis stating that teachers who are members of the organization respond more frequently with congruent responses than teachers who are nonmembers of the organization was not supported. A relationship between membership and congruent responses was found, however, in that nonmembers responded significantly more frequently with congruent responses than members.

9. The hypothesis stating that teachers who are nonmembers of the organization respond more frequently with incongruent responses than teachers who are members of the organization was not supported.

10. The hypothesis stating that teachers judged to be higher level participants in organization activities respond more frequently with congruent responses than teachers judged to be lower level participants in organization activities was supported. The significant relationship, however, was uncovered when the participants were divided into three groups.

11. The hypothesis stating that teachers judged to be lower level participants in organization activities respond more frequently with inconsistent responses than teachers judged to be higher level participants in organization activities was not supported.

12. The hypothesis stating that older teachers judged to be less interested in politics respond more frequently with congruent responses than younger teachers judged

to be less interested in politics was not supported. A significant relationship between older and younger, low interest in politics teachers was found. Younger teachers responded more frequently with congruent responses than older teachers.

13. The hypothesis stating that older teachers judged to be more interested in politics respond more frequently with congruent responses than older teachers judged to be less interested in politics was not supported.

14. The hypothesis stating that younger teachers judged to be lower level participants in organization activities respond more frequently with inconsistent responses than younger teachers judged to be higher level participants in organization activities was not supported.

In conclusion, the effort to investigate teacher group cohesion by identifying characteristics assumed to be related to the occurrence of factors effecting cohesion, was somewhat disappointing. Of the five characteristics used in the study, only age, membership, and level of participation appeared related to significant differences in the occurrence of those factors. Even in these cases, the characteristics were related to only one of the three possible responses, and the characteristics were either associated with the opposite of the proposed direction (e.g., membership) or the sample had to be broken into smaller, more distinctive groups of teachers (e.g., age and level of participation). In general, the characteristics selected for the study were either too broad or inappropriately related to the phenomena. The assumption that such broad characteristics were related to the occurrence of congruent, incongruent, and inconsistent responses is invalid and an inadequate foundation for investigating the strength of teacher group cohesion. Consequently, the

impact of the study's results on the problem of teacher group cohesion is somewhat negated. Nevertheless, the results of the study do suggest that different types of teachers, with different experiences and characteristics, respond in distinctive ways that could possibly effect teacher group cohesion.

In addition, the study also suggested that teachers are highly cohesive in the congruity of their beliefs with the policy positions of teacher organizations. Of the 12 issues involved in the study, the sampled averaged 8.21 congruent responses with the range from 7.33 congruent responses (teachers 40 to 57 years) to 10.00 congruent responses (higher participation teachers). It appears that, as a group, teachers possess a high degree of uniformity in the direction of their beliefs regarding the field of teaching.

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